

of pollutants on the Pavlovian behaviour of dogs. Since the working groups completed their separate reports, the WHO secretariat has spent three years watering them down still further to produce the final version, now published. It is small wonder that it falls between all stools. It turns out to be a trite comment on the problem of pollution, which is in any case chiefly a national and engineering rather than an international and biological problem. Most of it is concerned with the basic principles of evaluating pollution and there are three sections on air, soil and water pollution.

The trouble is that, after so much compromise, the report reads like a simple minded textbook.

If pollution of the air is to be avoided rather than abated, plans must be made so that power stations, industrial plants and domestic sources of pollution do not "overload" the air. In many parts of the world, careful surveys of concentrations of pollutants are made before places are developed for industrial use or as areas of high population density. This practice has much to commend it, and the development of many pollution problems is avoided by the recognition of the importance of air pollution in town planning.

This is almost a random example of what the report has to say about the use of measurements of pollution for planning and economic development. Most of it is written in the same strain.

The working groups and the WHO secretariat have certainly produced a document that offends no one, but that is chiefly because it says nothing new and makes no specific criticisms or suggestions. It can always be argued by enthusiasts that the final report is not what counts. The really significant work takes place in the working groups, where experts are forced to rub shoulders, thrash out their common problems and go home the better for the meeting. That is the familiar justification of many international meetings of this kind from which platitudinous communiqués emerge.

Parliament in Britain

from our Parliamentary Correspondent

Smelters

MR ROY MASON, Minister of Power, confirmed that the difficulties in the construction of Dungeness B power station will not affect the price to be paid for electricity for the aluminium smelter being built in Anglesey. The electricity price was negotiated on the basis of Dungeness B costs, which have now increased; but Mr Mason said that the chairman of the CEGB had assured him that this will not prejudice the contracts, which include allowances for contingencies. (Written answer, January 20.)

Tonga

THE Ministry of Overseas Development, Mr Reginald Prentice reported, is giving advice to Tonga about negotiations with petroleum companies. Several seepages of oil have been seen in Tonga since last September; but, Mr Prentice said, it was not yet clear whether the oil is present in commercial quantities. (Oral answer, January 21.)

Steel Industry

MR ROY MASON made some remarks about the contracts recently signed by the British Steel Corporation for the

supply of fuel oil up to 1972, to a value of £120 million. He would not ask the BSC to rescind the contracts; they did not represent a new departure for the steel industry, and coal was not a practical alternative. Suitable distribution facilities for natural gas did not exist; in any case, there was every prospect that all the natural gas available until 1972 would be absorbed into uses which would displace oil, and very often oil of higher value than that used by the steel industry. (Written answers, January 21.)

Technology

THE Prime Minister announced that the Government accepts the objectives of the report on technological innovation produced by the Central Advisory Council for Science and Technology. The specific measures the report recommends for innovation in small firms were being pursued, Mr Wilson said, through the Industrial Liaison Service and the pilot schemes to help small firms in Glasgow and Bristol. Substantial assistance was being given to the work of the British Productivity Council, the British Institute of Management and the Centre for Interfirm Comparison. Innovation was being supported through the use of Government purchasing power. In Government establishments, future contraction would depend on an assessment of the need to maintain adequate levels of work of good quality. (Written answers, January 21.)

Forestry

MR MARCUS KIMBALL had some strong words to say about the support of forestry research in Britain. There appears, he said, to be "absolutely no control at present over research projects". The Natural Environment Research Council was expanding its forestry institute, the Nature Conservancy was expanding its forestry research, and now the Forestry Commission was building a new research unit at Edinburgh. This was empire building of the worst sort, and a waste of taxpayers' money, he said. Mr John Mackie, for the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, promised to look into the situation. (Oral answer, January 22.)

Concorde

MR WEDGWOOD BENN said that the cost of developing the Concorde supersonic airliner had risen substantially, and could rise further. On November 29, 1962, the estimate for the British share of the development of Concorde had been between £75 and £85 million; but £155 million of British money had already been spent, at the prices prevailing when the original estimates were made. (Written answers, January 22.)

Supply of Drugs

MR DAVID ENNALS, Parliamentary Secretary at the Home Office, explained that there are no means by which the Government can prohibit the import of pharmaceutical products from abroad. He was dealing with a demand for information about the operations of the Inter-Continental Pharmaceuticals group of companies, of which Mr Eric Ogden wanted to know whether the Government had taken steps to see that the drugs imported were at once effective and safe, whether it could prevent doctors from buying drugs at low prices and selling them to hospitals at a profit, and whether he would prohibit some of the company's activities. Mr Ennals explained that there seemed to be no evidence of some of the abuses complained of. (Question, January 28.)